

Manitoba, treaty Indians in Saskatchewan and Inuit in the Northwest Territories. If I had not realized how complex this issue was before I became involved with the subcommittee, I certainly realized it after those consultations had been completed. I therefore have the greatest appreciation for the negotiations and compromises which took place to arrive at that part of the agreement dealing with First Nations.

I would like to touch on just a few of the main features of the Charlottetown agreement, in view of the hour and in view of the fact that other honourable senators still want to speak tonight.

Honourable senators, by this agreement the Government of Canada is to recognize within the Constitution the inherent right of Aboriginal peoples to self-government within Canada. This includes all Aboriginal peoples, including status and non-status Indians, Inuit and Métis. This is a very important aspect of the agreement as it affirms, once and for all, the inherent right of Canada's Aboriginal peoples to govern their own affairs, a right which will be entrenched in the basic law of the land.

Recognition of the Aboriginal peoples' inherent right to self-government is a milestone in the history of this country. For Canada's first peoples it represents a victory for justice and self-esteem, and a practical step toward greater prosperity. This recognition of self-government is important because it will secure the legitimate place of Aboriginal peoples in the renewed federation, and assist Aboriginal communities in realizing their full potential within Canada.

Self-government is not a new concept to Canada's Aboriginal peoples who, as we know, governed their own affairs long before European settlers arrived in this country. But they have been unjustly denied this basic right for too many years. This is an opportunity to change the relationships of the past, a past in which Aboriginal peoples have often been treated as second class citizens, and recognize and respect the inherent right of the first peoples of Canada.

Honourable senators, the agreement also calls for the recognition of Aboriginal governments as a third order of government within Canada. In order to ensure some measure of consistency with federal and provincial laws, Aboriginal laws made by self-governing jurisdictions will have to be consistent with Canadian laws which are essential to the preservation of peace, order and good government.

**The Hon. the Acting Speaker:** Honourable senators, the rules require that I point out to the honourable senator that 15 minutes has passed.

**Senator Oliver:** May I take one or two minutes more, honourable senators?

**The Hon. the Acting Speaker:** Is it agreed, honourable senators?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**Senator Oliver:** In addition, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms will apply to Aboriginal governments as it does to

federal and provincial governments. Until self-government agreements are in place, existing laws will continue to apply.

With respect to the financing of self-government, it has been agreed that matters relating to financing will be dealt with in a political accord. This responsibility will be shared by the federal, provincial and Aboriginal governments. The types of costs involved in implementing Aboriginal self-government would include, for example, the cost of negotiating self-government agreements and establishing governmental institutions, if they are not already in place. However, these costs would be incurred over an extended period as self-government is phased in. There is no reason to believe these costs would be significantly higher than maintaining the status quo.

In any case, the right to self-government for Aboriginal peoples is ultimately a matter of simple justice, not of costs and benefits. This being said, the implementation of Aboriginal self-governments will have significant economic and social benefits for Canada as a whole. The first step toward self-reliance is self-esteem, and self-esteem is an essential ingredient of independence. With a greater ability to control effectively their own affairs, Canada's first peoples will be able to act responsibly so as to reduce their dependency on government, and contribute fully to Canada's economic and social growth.

Honourable senators, I think this is a good agreement. I truly believe this agreement as it affects Aboriginal peoples and all peoples of Canada is worthy of our whole-hearted support.

**Hon. Consiglio Di Nino:** I thank honourable senators for allowing me to speak for a few moments at this late hour.

First, I should like to congratulate all those who participated in the arduous and complex process at Charlottetown. I am most satisfied with the results of the historic consensus reached on August 28, 1992.

I am happy that our leaders have recognized and confirmed Quebec's uniqueness and distinctiveness. I have always cherished this Canadian distinctiveness. Indeed, it may well be the reason why Canada to-day remains an independent country.

I am particularly delighted with the gains made by the Aboriginal peoples. Canada's original inhabitants have been subjected to many injustices and indignities which should shame us all.

Their self-respect, their independence, their culture, their way of life, their religious and spiritual beliefs, their dignity—these things were taken away from many of them. We are only now learning the extent of the damage. Frankly, I doubt that we can ever fully repair the damage or properly repay our debt.

The Charlottetown consensus is far from perfect, as you have heard. Others have expressed opinions on areas of disagreements. This evening, I should like to make some brief comments on sections of the Canada clause.